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DE RUEHJA #0727/01 0730005  
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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3832  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0531  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3315  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1391  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 7539  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 JAKARTA 000727

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/13/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [UNSC](#) [BM](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: DAS JOHN ENGAGES PARLIAMENTARIANS AND GOI ON BURMA

REF: A. JAKARTA 517 (REES MEETS BURMA CAUCUS CHAIR)

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 293 (DPR FLEXES MUSCLES ON BURMA)

[1](#)C. JAKARTA 98 (UNSC RESOLUTION ON BURMA)

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Classified By: Classified By: Political Officer Eric W. Kneedler, Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

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[1](#)1. (C) During a March 6-10 visit to Jakarta, EAP DAS Eric John discussed Burma with members of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) Caucus on Burma and, in a separate meeting, with GOI Secretary General for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Imron Cotan. DAS John emphasized that Indonesia's size, stature within ASEAN, and success in making the transition from authoritarianism to democracy made it a natural candidate to lead efforts to break the impasse with Burma. He acknowledged that Chinese support would be central to any successful effort to pressure Burma. During a March 8 lunch, parliamentarians from the DPR's Burma Caucus derided the GOI's lack of leadership on the issue, reviewed their efforts to pressure the GOI on Burma (Refs B and C), and outlined several proposals to try to help Burma. On March 7, Cotan expressed frustration with Burma's continued intransigence, argued that Indonesia had tried and failed to use its access to the regime to push for change, and stressed the importance of a U.S.-China dialogue on Burma. End Summary.

MEETING WITH THE INDONESIAN PARLIAMENTARY BURMA CAUCUS

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[1](#)2. (C) On March 8, the Charge d'Affaires hosted a luncheon for DAS John and eight members of DPR's Burma Caucus: Djoko Susilo, the Chairman of the Burma Caucus and a legislator from the National Mandate Party (PAN); Marzuki Darusman, from Golkar; Muhammad Atho'illah Shohibul Hikam, formerly of the National Awakening Party (PKB); Nursyahbani Katjasungkana (PKB); Trisanti Mitayani (PAN); Anna Mu'awanah (PKB); Akhmad Lazuardi Saragih, from the Indonesian Democratic Party - Struggle (PDI-P); and Eva Kusuma Sundari (PDI-P). Roshan Jason, the Executive Director of the Malaysia-based ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC), also participated.

[1](#)3. (C) Chairman Djoko reviewed the origins of the AIPMC, noting that the Caucus was founded in Kuala Lumpur in 2004 as

a mechanism to help encourage democratic reform in Burma. Djoko contended that his contacts in the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs told him that the GOI might have supported the UNSC resolution on Burma had they been given an opportunity to provide more input into the wording of the resolution. His Foreign Ministry contacts told him that ASEAN simply was not given enough "room" to operate. Djoko criticized the GOI's proposal to export "dwifungsi" (Note: the term means "two functions," the Soeharto-era arrangement under which the Indonesian military had social-political as well as military functions.) as unconscionable given Indonesia's own recent difficult history under military rule.

He lamented the lack of a dialogue between the GOI and the DPR on Burma and expressed his hope that the Burma Caucus could be used as a vehicle to help spread democracy not only in Burma, but throughout the region.

14. (C) DAS John summarized the evolution of the UNSC vote on Burma. He assured the parliamentarians that the decision to take the issue to a vote was the culmination of over one and a half years of reasoned, deliberate efforts to strike an appropriate balance in the wording and the timing of the resolution. He noted that ultimately one or more parties would always feel that the "timing was not right" for a vote on Burma, and that therefore the U.S. had no choice but to finally bring the issue to a vote. He said that he could not recall the issue of ASEAN specific language ever being raised during deliberations over the resolution. He stressed that the U.S. expected Indonesia to abide by its promise to take the Burma issue to the Human Rights Council. Indonesia had a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate its capacity for regional leadership by playing a central role in resolving the Burma issue.

TIME FOR INDONESIA TO TAKE A LEAD

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15. (C) Nursyahbani Katjasungkana agreed with DAS John's assessment and said Indonesia should draw from the lessons it learned in spearheading the creation of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). Indonesia had demonstrated its ability to balance ASEAN sensibilities with its own national diplomatic priorities and should be able to reprise that role with Burma. As a starting point for such an effort, the GOI should consider a "Track 2" diplomatic effort and invite all the non-governmental actors in Burma to Jakarta for a meeting. The Burma Caucus had already approached President Yudhoyono about leading such an effort, but the President had not yet responded. Eva Kusuma Sundari lamented that the GOI was too "conservative" and suggested the GOI would never take the lead. Besides, she offered, the GOI had little to no access to the Burmese.

16. (C) Djoko Susilo explained that few Indonesians understood the Burma issue and noted that this lack of public awareness allowed the GOI to maneuver diplomatically without any fear of a public backlash. An increase in public awareness would force the GOI to address the issue with a greater sense of urgency. As part of the Burma Caucus' overall effort to put a spotlight on the issue, the Caucus hoped to include Burma on the agenda for the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) Conference in Bali April 29 - May 4. Over 100 delegations would come to Bali for the IPU, he said, and if the IPU tackled the Burma issue, this would undoubtedly generate much needed attention in the Indonesian media. Djoko hoped the U.S. Congress would send a delegation. The Indonesian Foreign Ministry had failed to apply any pressure on Burma, he said, and the GOI abstention on the UNSC was effectively an endorsement of the regime's behavior. A public outcry in Indonesia was needed to force the GOI into action.

LOOKING FOR OTHER OPTIONS  
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17. (C) DAS John emphasized that the U.S. consistently had conveyed to Rangoon and its international partners that it was willing to talk with the Burmese, but explained that the regime had not yet demonstrated any reciprocal interest in dialogue. He urged caution in setting up a conference without clear, concrete goals in mind. Nursyahbani Katjasungkana responded that the AIPMC had encountered similar obstacles in its attempt to communicate with the Burmese; they didn't have any effective channels either. The DPR's Burma Caucus, for example, would like to invite Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy as well as members of the '88 Generation Students to Jakarta for a conference, but the Burmese regime would likely not consent to such a plan. When DAS John suggested that the DPR Burma Caucus invite them publicly and force the regime to confront the issue under the glare of international scrutiny, Nursyahbani said the Caucus would prefer to use Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen as an intermediary as he had the best access to the regime.

18. (C) AS Hikam told DAS John that he was shocked by the GOI's abstention on the UNSC vote. The GOI was shackled by ASEAN and would probably not adopt a leadership role on its own. The international community would need to find a third way to tackle the issue, outside of the ASEAN context. The idea of a Special UN Envoy on Burma was a good one, but he would need to be a senior, well respected figure in order for General Than Shwe to view him as a peer. Fidel Ramos would be a good candidate for the job, he observed. DAS John agreed with the need to identify someone senior enough to see eye-to-eye with General Than Shwe and assured the parliamentarians that the U.S. was actively supporting the early appointment of a Special Envoy. Marzuki Darusman suggested that former Thai Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun might also be a good candidate for the position, given his solid work on the UN reform panel. DAS John replied that the U.S. would support any earnest effort to resolve the impasse and suggested that perhaps the ASEAN Eminent Persons Group could step in where the ASEAN troika had failed.

19. (C) Trisanti Mitayani noted that the Burma Caucus had organized a meeting with the Indonesian Minister of Trade Mari Pangestu in September of 2006 to identify possible economic issues the GOI could use as leverage in dealing with Burma. Though the meeting failed to produce anything

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concrete, clearly the issue of trade in general could be used to pressure Burma, despite the fact that Burma would use its veto to prevent the topic from being raised in any ASEAN context such as ASEAN-EU negotiations.

ENGAGING CHINA AND INDIA  
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10. (C) AS Hikam highlighted China's central role on the issue and said his Chinese contacts told him that even Beijing looked to Indonesia as the logical candidate to lead an effort on Burma. Hikam said that China had an obvious strategic interest in resolving the Burma issue and suggested the United States work on the question with China. DAS John replied that he had in fact traveled to Beijing prior to his visit to Jakarta specifically to talk to the Chinese about Burma. During his meetings in Beijing he had stressed the fact that a well-governed Burma would assist Chinese interests there, and emphasized that the Chinese should wield their influence to stop the Burmese from altering the constitution to exclude opposition parties from the political process. Such a move in Rangoon would not only set back democracy in Burma, but also lock the United States and China into a cycle of confrontation over Burma at the United Nations.

11. (C) Marzuki Darusman asked whether the Indians had been a useful interlocutor on Burma. DAS John replied that India

had shown little interest in pursuing the matter with the USG and suggested that India would perhaps prove more responsive to a direct approach from ASEAN. Marzuki offered that the best approach to Burma would involve a roadmap with specific roles for both the Chinese and the Indians to play at different stages of the process. Though the current impasse was largely a function of Burma's intransigence, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) would need to be a part of any renewed effort to resolve the situation. He urged the U.S. to press the NCD to adopt a more flexible approach.

DAS JOHN MEETS WITH SECRETARY GENERAL COTAN  
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¶12. (C) During a March 7 meeting with Secretary General Cotan, DAS John noted that a majority of UNSC members supported the January 12 resolution on Burma. Though disappointed by the outcome in the UNSC, the U.S. endorsed the idea of eventually taking the Burma issue to the Human Rights Council. DAS John told Cotan that the USG fully expected Indonesia to act on its stated support for this initiative, as outlined in the GOI's official explanation of its abstention in the UNSC.

¶13. (C) DAS John asked Secretary General Cotan whether he believed ASEAN would succeed in forming a three-country Commission to address Burma. Cotan doubted Burma would ever accept such a commission, and added that he did not believe the SPDC would engage with the international community over the next twelve months. Indonesia was frustrated, he said, and Burma's refusal to make any concessions or show signs of progress left Indonesia with very little room to defend the regime and stave off international pressure. According to Cotan, Foreign Minister Wirajuda made this point publicly following the ASEAN Summit in Cebu last January. Cotan said that behind the scenes in Cebu, ASEAN Foreign Ministers had pressured Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win. Cotan added that in his last conversation with Nyan Win, Foreign Minister Wirajuda had warned that U.N. Under Secretary for Political Affairs Gambari's successor would be the former American Ambassador to Jakarta, and that the SPDC "should not mess with him."

¶14. (C) DAS John argued that President Yudhoyono's experience as a general helping Indonesia in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy made him a good interlocutor for the SPDC. Cotan agreed, and stressed that Burma and Indonesia had enjoyed a long history of strong bilateral ties. Cotan said he believed that General Than Shwe was the primary obstacle to reform, and argued that the situation might improve if he were to step down. Even if there were not a fundamental change in Burma's system of government, Than Shwe's eventual exit might lead to more openness and less intimidation.

¶15. (C) According to Cotan, Burma had grown "comfortable" and

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the regime would continue to resist change as long as it enjoyed China's support; the U.S. would have to actively discuss the issue with China to break the impasse. DAS John agreed that China was key and briefed Cotan on his March 5 meetings in Beijing on Burma. During his talks with the Chinese, DAS John had stressed that if Burma's National Convention permanently froze out opposition elements, the stage would be set for repeated confrontations in the Security Council and other international fora, an outcome that would be in no one's best interests.

¶16. (U) This message has been cleared with DAS John.

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